

Roosevelt Drive, Butte, L.P. Meyers, photographer, MHS Photograph Archives

Hobo Heresy

Three Women on an Unconventional Tour of the American West in 1922

by Kathryn Stephen Wright

All of mankind might be divided, according to Charles Lamb, into two races: the race of men who borrow and the race of men who lend. If I could add a modest supplementary classification of my own on a narrower basis, I should label all who tour as either Hoylists or heretics. In the first group I should place all those who travel according to accepted ideas—according to Hoyle—and who stay at home rather than do otherwise; in the second, those who travel as they please, or as they can, but who travel. To the first or conformist group would belong the Arrow collar men; to the second all barefoot boys and, among others, a band of three women who might be called The Three I's, for they were Iva, Aunt Isa, and I.

The first, who was from Kansas, had gone immediately from college to teach in a ranch school in northwestern Montana; the third, who was from New York, had done likewise; and the second, who was from Michigan and well over sixty, joined the other two in the spring of 1922 that they might all journey to California in a Ford.

Their purpose was two-fold: to see the country with as little expense as possible and to grow thin, for all three were generously proportioned—"plump," their friends delicately described them. That they are definitely heretics of the trail was due partly to temperament and partly to temperature, for they agreed to make the trip an expression of their individual desires, but subject of course to the weather.

WHEN THE DECISION ABOUT WHEN TO leave was accomplished we bought a Ford (embarrassing introductions over, the first person seems safe). We bought a Ford some three or four years old and christened it Oliver Twist, because it was so frequently "asking for more" gasoline. It was rather weak in the seats, too, the rear one especially, which looked like a fresh loaf of bread lately sat upon; and a coat of garish blue paint gave the body a bilious complexion, but that we soon remedied with a can of black enamel. On the whole, however, it was a good car, having to its credit a self-starter, a good pump, and two plate glass windows.

From this it might seem we were intimately acquainted with cars and their connections. Not so. For all we knew the Bendix Drive might have been a Boston boulevard. Aunt Isa could not run a car at all, I learned after we bought it. And Iva, though she had driven for several years on the Kansas prairies, boasted no experience on mountain roads such as we planned to travel. We could not qualify for a write up in the "Helena Hell-Cat" or the "Kaibab Chatter" describing us as super-females who knew how to take a car apart and put

it together again with both eyes shut. We could have done no more for Oliver than the King's men did for Humpty-Dumpty after his famous fall, as indeed was proven before the summer was over. But that did not deter us; we were Heretics.

At this point—the buying of the car—our friends realized that our intentions were serious and began advising further equipment. We must have a man.

"You three women shouldn't go alone."

"Your protection requires a man."

"A man is so handy for pumping tires."

To such and similar sentiments we listened politely but firmly. We would go manless or not at all. That there was truth in what they said, we were not so blind as to deny, but we wanted to prove that even women as ignorant of mechanics as we could dispense with paternalism; besides, a fourth passenger would be hard on tires.

When our well-meaning counselors saw that we were adamant on this point, they urged other comforts: a snake proof tent, which according to circulars could be put up with ease by a child of five; folding cots, folding tables, folding chairs,



Teachers Kathryn Stephen, Sadie Fermoye, Iva Bishop, Pearl Johnson, and Maurice Windus on the steps of the Ranch School



cooking kits, and eating kits; and, of course, revolvers for the crowd. We objected in general on account of excess baggage. In particular, we suggested that fire-arms in our hands would prove more dangerous to ourselves than to anyone else, and in case of attack there was always the tire gauge, which if properly held would look wicked enough.

We listened, as I say, politely but firmly, and then bought our equipment: twenty feet of rope, a small axe, three pie tins, and some fishing tackle.

It was on the second of June that we started off for California—nearly a week later than we had planned. A sudden snow had closed all the mountain passes leading from the Flathead and Missoula valleys, and men caught on their way from Spokane came into town telling how they had pushed snow for miles with their bumpers. Clearly it was wise to wait until the roads were opened. Each day we scanned the papers, but they offered no encouragement. The road west to Spokane and Seattle, which we had planned to take, was closed and no one knew when it would be otherwise. Probably not until a Chinook wind would see fit to melt a path.

One day when our patience was well-nigh exhausted came the news that a road east through Hell-Gate to Butte would be open at three o'clock. We saw our chance, and turned our route inside out. We would go to California by way of Butte and the roads south through Utah and Nevada. It would mean crossing the desert, but even that would be better than waiting.

On the morning of the second, then, we loaded the car. When everything was carried out to the garage and dumped in a pile, we realized that with all our elimination of cots and kits, there was an amazing amount of impedimenta. First we hoisted Aunt Isa's large blue telescope into position at one end of the carrier, a simple affair of two narrow boards reaching from fender to fender. Then came my battered wicker suitcase, and next the small blue telescope. To our dismay the carrier appeared quite full. We turned and looked at the pile. Black traveling bag, small bag for toilet articles, two raincoats, three topcoats, two sweaters, a gym suit to be used as coveralls when we oiled the car, a box of utensils, three tiny black pillows (our one luxury), three blankets, and a toaster. The only thing to do was to put it all in somewhere, for none

“. . . a last glimpse of the little town where we had taught everything from Colgates to Chemistry.”

Charlo, Montana, in the winter of 1921-1922



MHS Photograph Archives

of us would compromise. The blankets we folded and laid on the back seat, which improved that springless member considerably. For the rest we walked round and round the car, and whenever we saw a crevice that had been overlooked stuffed in a coat or a kettle-cover.

At last, when everything was in except us, we stood at attention by the car for a parting shot from the camera. We would label it "The Start," or "Off for the Summer," or some such gay caption and point to it next winter when we were safe at home among friends. As a matter of fact, however, the camera proved unkind, and the picture too cruel for exhibition.

This ceremony over, Iva took the wheel. We were to take turns driving, but because of superior experience the first was unanimously voted hers. Aunt Isa climbed in beside her, I perched behind on the blankets, and we were off—waving frantically to the people on the streets.

For several miles our road lay at the foot of the Mission Range, that giant overthrust of craggy granite so little known and yet only comparable in grandeur to its neighbors in Glacier Park some seventy-five miles to the north. Old Teton, or the Oyster Shell, as he is sometimes called from the sharpness of his contour, seemed higher and more aloof than usual. His throat was muffled in clouds and appeared a vast distance from the rocky forehead which peeped out far above, etched in snow.

We came to a dip in the road and turned for a last glimpse of the little town where we had taught the use of everything from Colgates to Chemistry. A few dots on the prairie now, that was all. Some low white ones were houses and a "Gen'l Merchandise" store; two tall red ones were the grain elevators. Behind the brow of the hill they sank out of sight.

After a day's run through country typical of that part of Montana—mountains richly wooded and mountains shorn by fires until the bare dead spikes of trees made them seem a gigantic currycomb, or some ancient instrument of torture; narrow passes walled by colored clay; and open ranch-lands dotted with lowly shacks of homesteaders, we reached Anaconda, famous for its chimney and a corporation. The tallest chimney in the world, though built high above the town for cleanliness, still belches enough poison to kill the flowers and trees, or at least to keep them in a comatose state; and the Anaconda Copper Mining Company is the answer to nearly every question in the state. "Who owns this?" or "Why is that?" the stranger asks. The reply is invariably "The A.C.M."

We spent that first night at the Anaconda Tourist Camp, where to our delight was proved the wisdom of our manlessness. We were unfolding our blankets and secretly wishing that since it was so cold we did not have to sleep on the ground quite yet, when the overseer and his wife came out and invited us to spend the night in their cabin. "We wouldn't ask you," they said, "if you had a man along, but we felt kinda sorry for you wimmen." That night we wrote to our skeptical friends of the triumph, grinning broadly.

THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE TRIP, BOTH in theory and practice, we held firmly to our ideas on the subject of a "man along" with but one exception. We did weaken once, but only once, for the result of our backsliding only strengthened our convictions.

We had been riding all day through a monotony of sagebrush in southern Montana, when toward evening we saw ahead of us on the road the figure of a man walking. As we drew nearer, it became evident that he carried a pack and that he limped slightly. By common consent we decided to pick him up. There were three of us against one lame man, and anyway it would be only human. So we did.

He told us that he was bound for Arizona in search of work. He had been a garage man but inside work did not agree with him, and he was hiking south to get something to do on a ranch for the winter. When he left us at our camping place he said that he would be on his way by three o'clock the next morning and that he hoped to see us again.

"Well, he wasn't a bad sort," Aunt Isa said.

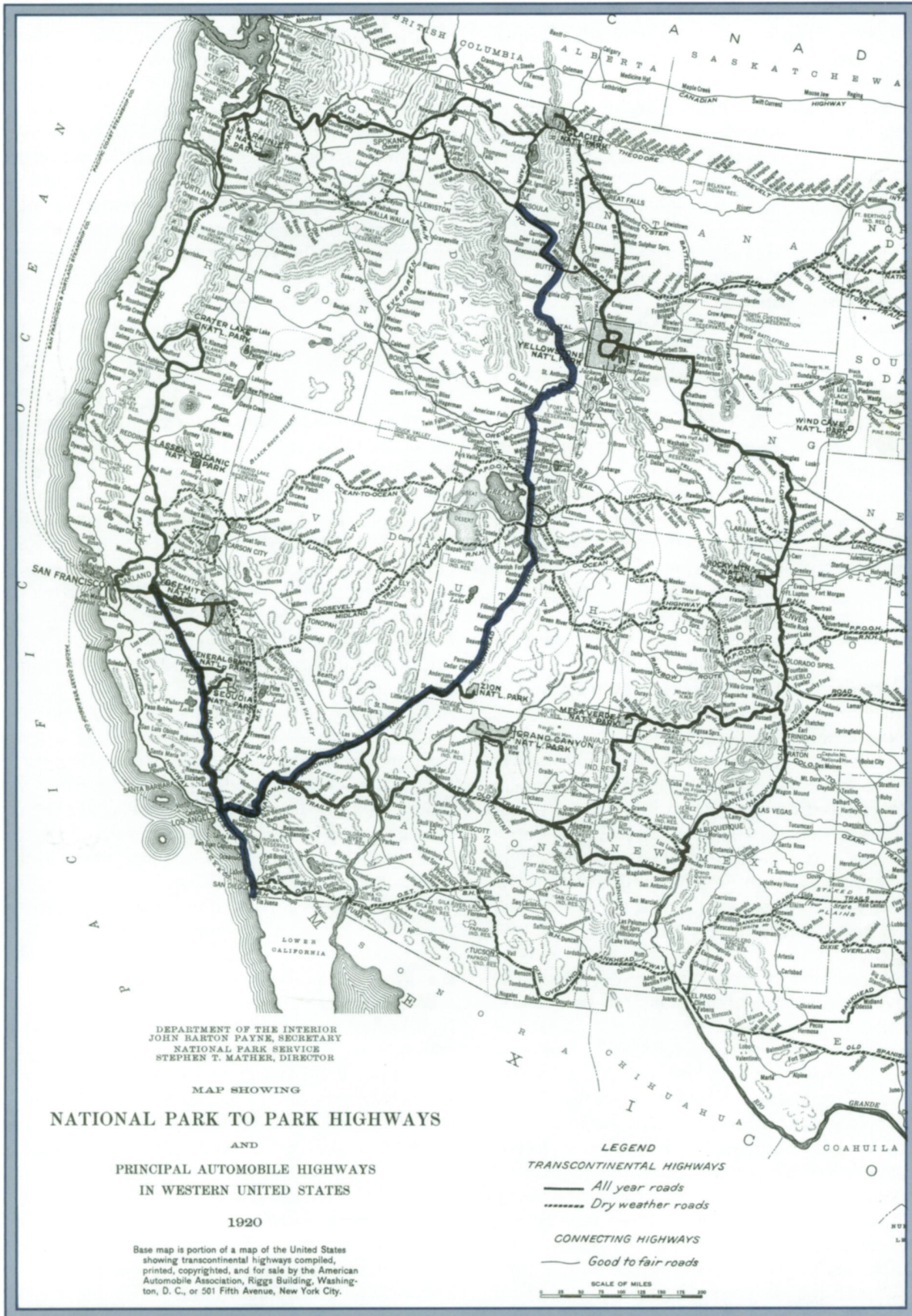
"No," replied Iva, "but supposing we catch up to him in the morning. We're going to Arizona ourselves and we'd have a hard time getting rid of him."

"Yes, but if he gets up at three surely someone else will have taken him in long before we start."

Aunt Isa's last remark relieved us and we went to a serene repose.

But either traffic was more scarce even than we had thought or drivers were indisposed toward the solitary hiker, for the next morning about fifteen miles from camp we overtook our young man. He waved us a cordial greeting and there was nothing to do but invite him to ride.

At noon we stopped for lunch by a little white schoolhouse on the top of a hill from where the mountains seemed a relief map spread out about



Courtesy of Dave Walter

us. Nearby was the wagon of a sheep herder, an arched white canopy suggesting the covered wagon of cinema fame. After lunch our passenger offered to “tighten ’er up a bit”—referring to the bolts on Oliver. We assented, glad of an opportunity to withdraw and discuss how to dispose of him. The council was held behind the schoolhouse after this manner:

- Iva: Well, it looks as though we are in for it.
Aunt Isa: He behaves all right.
I: Yes, but how long will he keep it up?
Aunt Isa: Until he gets where he wants to go, most likely.
I: Which is Arizona. We’re safe that far then.
Aunt Isa: Pshaw, he has a good face.
Iva: Things are not always what they seem.
Aunt Isa: I’ve seen more life than either of you girls and I think his face is just exactly what it seems.
Iva: Granted that it is, we’ve still to consider that it is, after all, a man’s face.
I: Besides, he is hard on the tires and springs.
Aunt Isa: Yes, but he’s tightening up the bolts, isn’t he?

Neither of us could dispute the truth of what she said. It was urged moreover that since he was a garage man he might be able to do more than “tighten up the bolts.” What he took out of our treasury by wear on tires he might pump back after a blow-out. It was decided, then, that we would offer him a passage to Arizona on the condition he give in return his bolt-tightening powers and any other miscellaneous mechanics he might be possessed of.

We returned to Oliver and the young man, the lure of luxury strong upon us; but for some reason or other no one opened the offer. Each looked at the other as though to signal the attack, but none of us let on that we understood. Aunt Isa said afterwards it must have been instinct warning us he would prove faithless. Perhaps she was right.

Shortly after lunch it began to rain in an un-Montana-like sort of way until the roads were smoozy with gumbo mud. We came to a town, Dell. We needed gas, and while we were filling, our bolt tightener bolted. A closed car that drove up appealed to him strongly in the rain, and he transferred his allegiance. Fifteen minutes later we were on our knees in the mud putting on chains

and an hour later we were chopping sagebrush in a vain attempt to fill up the mud holes that gurgled around our four hubs. We began to wish we were on the desert. We continued to wish, and to chop, for several hours, until a team came to our rescue.

That was not the end of our backsliding physically, but it was mentally. We had had our trial flight and it was a failure. Whether the young man could have helped had he stayed or whether he would have stayed had we asked him were matters of conjecture only. The fact was, he had left us on a sticky road and we had been stuck. That was enough. We were through.

NO TOURIST WHO IS A TRUE HERETIC will insist on sleeping in an auto camp every night, for he would lose much of the thrill of novelty and adventure in sleeping arrangements. We had an antipathy to the orthodox camp to begin with. They had always seemed so crowded and so—khaki! Not that we disapproved of people of the cloth—we wore it ourselves—but we objected to being permanently dun and indistinguishable among the dusty mob. Moreover, we had, of course, no tent, and we soon exhausted the pleasures of lying down to and getting up from our repose in full view of some hundred-odd tent-flaps. Accordingly, we registered only when we needed to wash our clothes or ourselves, or when no more interesting place presented itself.

This last condition seldom occurred, for as a rule we did not lack unusual quarters. We slept during our trip in a boat-house, behind a city sign board, on a Mormon front porch, in the middle of the road, in a college dormitory, on the desert, in a haystack, in a log-cabin quite lively with pack-rats, and in canyons too numerous to mention.

It was in one of these canyons that we had reason to remember our friends’ advice about firearms. We had chosen to camp in a narrow pass high walled by the red and yellow sandstone so common in Utah. After supper, I took a towel and soap to a shallow place in the stream near the road. I had washed the dust from the northern side of my neck and was about to continue on the southern when I heard voices. I looked up. Some half dozen men were filing out onto the road from bushes on the opposite side. It was a complete surprise, for we had supposed ourselves utterly alone. They shambled over to some trees not far from the stream and sat down, all the while passing remarks in a low tone. Occasionally, one of them burst into a hoarse cackle.

As soon as I could, with dignity, I gathered up my towel and soap and went back to the car. Iva and Aunt Isa did not like the looks of things any better than I, and we were about to pack up and leave when we remembered the large patch we had just put in one of the rear tires. It required a rest of several hours, and as we had no spare we could not be careless of what we did have. We must stay.

"But what shall we do?" we asked Aunt Isa.

She was already arranged for the night but sat up in her bathrobe to think it over. Finally she gave her opinion.

"If they meant any mischief they'd not be so bold, but to make sure, why not get out that thing that looks like the barrel of a gun—what do you call it?"

"The tire gauge!" and Iva was at the tool box rummaging. In a moment we were sitting side by side in our blankets and practicing how to hold the gauge like a pistol. We had not yet decided who should be the permanent arsenal, when a loud ca-plunge! sounded from the river. Then a light played for a moment on the wall of rock above. There was a pause—the sound of men's voices laughing—and then the ca-plunge again.

It was quite evident they only wanted to scare us—the harmless sort of trick a schoolboy would play—and indeed we were not disturbed again. But we were glad to have the tire gauge about us and are still convinced we were safer traveling with that than with a revolver.

EVEN A TRIP AS UNCONVENTIONAL AS ours requires the keeping of accounts, a fact we were not long in realizing. Since the problem was distasteful, we set about solving it as simply as we could. We bought a pocket-book and each put five dollars in it. When anything was needed for the common good, such as oil, gas or repairs, we paid for it out of the common pocket-book—the C.P., we called it. Each one held the purse strings a week at a time, marking the items in a notebook for the purpose. At the end of the week, the C.P. and the book were balanced and passed on to the next treasurer. Later, of course, when our expenses became heavier as the car needed more extensive repairs, we contributed in larger amounts; but we tried never to have a surplus large enough to become a burden. How closely we figured is shown

"We began to wish we were on the desert."



MHS Photograph Archives

by the condition of the C.P. at the end of our trip: it contained one penny and a screw.

Money spent for personal wants concerned the individual only, who could keep an account or not as she pleased. Since we did not care to spend time, energy, or thought on cooking and since we all had our own ideas on how to eat and grow thin, we bought our food from our private funds instead of from the C.P. Not caring to load the car with boxes of supplies, we purchased what we needed as we went along—except for a few staples such as coffee and sugar. It was quite simple, and very cheap. Here is a page from one of our personal accounts, representing food for about a week.

Oranges	30¢
Dates	25¢
Buns	10¢
Raisins	25¢
Chocolate Bar	10¢
Beans	10¢
Figs	15¢
Bananas	10¢
Bread	10¢
Butter	25¢
Milk	10¢
Peaches	15¢
Tomatoes	10¢
Total	\$2.05

We do not offer this as a model menu for seven days. We do not offer it as a menu at all, but merely to show the sort of thing that kept us as thin and our wallets as fat as possible.

Our other divisions of labor were even more simple than the keeping of accounts. We had no official maker of fires. Whoever wanted a hot drink for breakfast got up and made it herself; whoever didn't remained in bed. Iva and I did the driving, each taking a half day shift regularly unless we were in traffic, when Iva kept the wheel. The car had to be oiled every morning, and whoever had first driving shift for the day took charge of the grease-cups. Breaking camp and packing up required two. Aunt Isa looked after this with the help of whichever one of us was not oiling. After a puncture or blow-out, we all took a turn at the pump, Aunt Isa refusing to be exempt. Twenty to thirty strokes was the number allowed each at one time, which proved a wise provision when we came to the desert, where we changed tires nine times in three days. At tire-patching, we likewise took turnabout, although this was Iva's special field. It was a particular and a sticky job—cleaning the cuts with gasoline and then poking in

the gum. The perfect patch was one allowed to rest for some hours, and Iva had often to take up cudgels against our impatience to be off.

One morning she was unexpectedly and competently reinforced by fate—and a bull. It happened to be a morning when Aunt Isa and I were disposed toward a cup of coffee, and Iva wasn't. Accordingly, then, she was still wrapped in her blanket when we had finished our breakfast and were eager to be off. Being unduly urged, she raised herself on one elbow and reminded us of the cemented tire-cut which had rested for only ten hours.

"Ten hours is a plenty," said Aunt Isa through a mouthful of hair pins.

For answer Iva held up a tin can and pointed to the directions.

"Well, it says twelve," Aunt Isa was forced to admit, "but it doesn't really mean twelve; ten or eleven would do just as well."

What would have been Iva's next defense, I can't say, for here is where fate stepped in. An ominous bellow sounded close at hand, and a monster with an unmistakably thick neck sauntered into view.

"Oh, my Lord, my Lord," shrieked Aunt Isa, "put the stuff into the car," and she hoisted her blue telescope into the rack. Another bellow.

"I'm going to the creek," she cried, and hurried off through the bushes.

Iva was very calm, and I tried to be. But as the bull approached, my courage fled, and so did I.

At the creek, Aunt Isa was nowhere to be seen, and I began to think she must be swimming under water, when she called from another direction that she had found a safe place. I followed the sound of her voice to a tiny deserted bungalow. There on the porch railing, breathless and with hair flying, stood Aunt Isa, a large stick poised in one hand.

"Come up, come up," she called, and then as I eyed the stepless distance from the ground to the porch, "Oh, of course, you need the ladder."

She hopped from the railing and lowered a diminutive ladder, à la Robinson Crusoe, insisting when I had climbed up that I pull it up after me. Not that she had ever heard of a ladder-climbing bull, but then one never could tell. I must confess I did feel safer.

"I wouldn't mind so much for myself," Aunt Isa said, "but it would be so terrible for a young girl like you to be gored and your parents notified."

I appreciated her thoughtfulness but suggested that we change the subject. That, however, was

not easy, the most current topic being so largely Bull. Accordingly, we said nothing.

We climbed down to shoo a herd of cattle in the direction of the bull, hoping to divert his attention from Iva and the car. Returning to our railing, we called to Iva for news of the bull. She answered in a muffled sort of voice that it was still there and we were to keep quiet. We wondered at the muffled tone, but assured ourselves she was all right. And so brave. Sitting out there in plain sight.

Before long, Iva called that the bull had at last followed the fair cattle and we could return.

"Say," Aunt Isa asked of her when we were back at the car, "what made you sound so queer?"

"Oh," she answered sheepishly, "I was under the robe in the back seat."

We were about to express our satisfaction that she was, after all, human, even as we, when she prevented us by saying with a twinkle, "Are you ready to go? The tires have been resting twelve hours to the minute."

I HAVE MENTIONED OUR SLEEPING IN numerous canyons on our trip, which is really a matter of course to the western camper, for desert, prairie land, and the canyons monopolize western topography. This is not difficult to understand when one realizes how broad a term "canyon" is. It seems to include everything from a narrow gorge-like pass to a chasm of vast proportions.

We reached our canyon climax at Bryce Canyon in southern Utah, and the Grand Canyon in Arizona. Of the two we were more interested in the former. Doubtless there are some who will resent this as libel against the reputation of a wonder so firmly established as the Grand Canyon of the Colorado. To such I would say that the fault lies not alone with the wonders but with advertising; for we had seen so many pictures and read so many articles that when we arrived we saw what we expected to see. It was grand; it was beautiful; it was terrible; but we were not surprised.

Bryce, on the other hand, though much smaller—comparing with the other about as a thimble would with a dishpan—we had scarcely ever heard of before. We had not the slightest idea of its character. In fact, at one time after leaving the main highway at Panguitch, we were on the point of turning back, for the road was uphill and deep with alkali dust.

"What's the use of ploughing through it," one of us remarked, "there can't be much to see, and we may ruin the car."

It is quite probable we would have faced about then had not a young surveyor come along with his gang. We asked his advice and he replied, with a smile, that we had better go on, now that we had come this far.

Arriving at the top, we knew why he had smiled. An artist had mixed his choicest paints—and then been prodigal. A sculptor had carved for days and nights—and laughed with the joy of it. How else explain those gold and Titian pinnacles cut in a million arabesques? And through it all was woven a lilting thread of harmony, the music of the singing pines. It has been said that somewhere in the world is a perfect bit of workmanship, original, unspoiled. It lay at our feet.

But the Grand Canyon is the practical joke of a great giant, who bulged his muscles and gnashed his teeth and said he'd show what he could do. So he ripped open the earth as deeply as he dared and threw in phantoms; weird rock temples of a world long dead. There is mystery here and a strange beauty, but scarcely happiness. Monstrous! you say. Perhaps, but I warned you we were heretics.

The best part of our visit to the Grand Canyon was the approach. Usually the tourist takes a train from Williams to the South rim, but the North rim, which is miles from any railroad, was nearer the Arrowhead Trail we were following and so more convenient for us. From Kanab we drove across a desert stretch and then began the ascent to the rim. After twenty miles of low-gear driving we were in the Kaibab National Forest. For sixty miles the road led through virgin timber where still live a few of the white-tailed black squirrels and where deer graze in the open spaces.

It was in this forest that we found the cabin of the pack-rats mentioned before. The ranger at Jacobs Lake station told us that cowboys and sheep herders occasionally stopped there for the night, and we were welcome to, if we wished. A large stone fireplace appealed to us, for the night was cold, and in spite of the tramp of rats in the loft overhead we enjoyed the luxury of spreading blankets before the fire. Fortunately, the rats, with unexpected consideration, kept to the loft all night. In the morning we were sufficiently rested to do the family wash, using an old skillet for a tub.

Even this primitive method of laundering would have been a luxury during the next six days while we were crossing the desert. In fact, our entire mode of life was changed. We rolled up at seven and unrolled at four, taking advantage of the cool early hours, for desert heat does not get underway much before eight o'clock. We carried extra gas in an old syrup tin and bought a new kerosene can for

water, not wishing to reduce the C.P. by the price of one of those red and blue affairs that fasten on the running board. The buying of gas alone was extravagance enough at sixty cents a gallon. At the Grand Canyon it had been ninety, but fortunately we needed none there.

We ate even less than we had been eating and drove more because the roads were so poor that to make any progress we had to keep going. For some days our average was not much over six miles an hour. This was not due to sand, as one might expect, but to ruts and sharp stones. The first day out we had a four-inch stone cut in our rear right tire—a new cord of which we were justly proud—and limped along with an old boot until we came to a town that boasted a vulcanizing outfit. California and its smooth roads began to assume the personality of a Promised Land.

Besides these changes in our daily habits, we were also reduced to cranking Oliver. At Kanab, a mysterious part called the “Starter Spring” had played false and been replaced. The garage optimist who served us mentioned the fact that the new part was a bit “off size” but assured us it was a matter of no moment. We took him at his word, but found out our mistake a day or two later. This experience, together with several others of a simi-

lar nature—four times we paid to have a knock removed that remained until the end—convinced us that we would do well to crank Oliver to California, where we hoped to find less optimistic garage men.

Not only did we adjust our living conditions on the desert but also our thinking. During that week we experienced what we called our “desert disillusion,” for many things were not as we had pictured them. Until then, for instance, whenever we heard the word “desert” we saw a perfectly flat expanse of burning yellow sand teeming with tarantulas, vocal with rattlesnakes, and whirling in a sandstorm. Instead, here were mountains—bare and dry to be sure—but real mountains nevertheless; red sand in place of yellow; sagebrush and cactus rather than vipers; and no sandstorm. In fact, the only “spider” we saw on the desert was a frying pan dropped from some tourist’s kit; and as for snakes, we saw several at a zoo in San Diego, but nowhere else. We had taken it for granted that all deserts were alike, not realizing that there is variety in deserts even as in dialects. We understood this more thoroughly when later, on the Santa Fe railroad, we saw the desert of our imagination even to the sandstorm, with a mirage thrown in for good measure.

“It was in this forest that we found the cabin of the pack-rats. . . .”



The cabin of the kindly packrats, Jacob's Lake Ranger Station, Kaibab National Forest

MHS Photograph Archives

Either because the season was early for Nevada or because the Arrowhead Trail was notoriously nasty, there were few tourists on this part of the desert. Occasionally, we did see indications of a party, and some of them were rather forceful. Bedroom slippers, a two-wheeled trailer, a corset, and innumerable inner tubes. But as soon as we struck the Sante Fe Trail—at Goffs, I believe it was, cleverly posted for miles around as the “coolest place on the desert”—we found ourselves one of a considerable caravan. At intervals along the road as far as the eye could see, were tiny horizontal ribbons of dust, each flying from the wheels of some successor to the prairie schooner. Every now and then one would drop out of the procession for a time to change a tire or patch a tube, and as often as possible we did our own repairing nearby for the pleasure of engaging them in conversation. Nearly all of those we talked to were migrating rather than sightseeing, some even carrying a portion of their household goods with them on the running boards or in trailers. There were ranchers, mechanics, salesmen, and merchants, mostly from Iowa and Nebraska. Many told stories of hardships in crossing Kansas during flood time, but there was a “follow-the-gleam” air about them which proved the old fire of the pioneers was not yet dead.

On the twenty-second day of June we steamed, or rather lurched and wobbled, into port at Pasadena and docked as quickly as possible at the Tourist Camp. We flatter ourselves that those who saw us enter the shower mistook us for a mirage when we came out. Of course, they were wrong for there was nothing of the desert left about us—thanks to the shower bath.

Nearly everyone back East knows more about California than anything else out West, due probably to the vigor of her “native sons,” who, I have heard, are increasing at an alarming rate. Suffice it to say, therefore, that we attempted to see what every self-respecting tourist should—catfish at Catalina through a glass-bottom boat, missions in the moonlight, tamales at Tia Juana, Ramona’s marriage place with its wishing well half-full of perfectly good street car fares dropped in by modern romanticists, and of course “Flaming Hollywood,” where, as everyone knows, stars may be seen on the streets about as commonly as in Big Timber, Montana.

Several weeks of intensive sightseeing and we turned northward across the Tehachapi Mountains toward Yosemite Park. After leaving Madera, the road became so mountainous that by the time we reached the Mariposa Grove of Big Trees we were about ready to call for quarter. Back and

shoulders ached from gripping the wheel, back and shoulders ached from jolts and jounces. The hairpin turns were an ever-increasing source of anxiety because while running in low gear on the grades, the horn, which was attached to the engine, became practically worthless. For warning at the curves we tried blowing a referee whistle, but its shrill toot proved more nerve-wracking than the suspense.

We were thankful for a momentary lifting of the tension when a young man coming back from the grove, in a car as obviously of the Universal make as our own, called out in apparent sympathy: “Pretty tough on you fellas with Fords.” It was a relief to discover we still had a sense of humor.

One glimpse of the undisputed monarch of the Red-Woods and we forgave the hairpin turns. The Grisly Giant is well named, for the red bark on his two hundred sixty-four feet of height appears to have grown hoary with long life, and the limbs bent and twisted, if not dead altogether. As we stood watching him and listening to his whispered Saga, a little man in khaki limped down the trail toward us. He carried a tripod under one arm and a camera slung across his back. As he drew near he began to adjust the tripod.

“I must have a picture of this,” he told us.

When it was taken we asked him the distance to the tunnel tree Wawona, and he told us eagerly, his deep black eyes moving swiftly from one to the other of us, to the giant, and back again, as if inquiring whether we found congenial company in the ancient tree. No one could doubt that he did. He had limped down from a lodge at some distance and would have to limp back. A pair of khaki leggins covered his weakness, but there was an unmistakable clank as he turned and left us. We looked at the giant again and wondered how long it would be before he too wore braces.

It was not until the next afternoon that we reached Yosemite Valley with every brake burned out. For from Mariposa the road drops to Wawona, climbs again, and drops once more into Yosemite. At Inspiration Point we went into control. From there the road drops to the valley, a distance of two thousand feet in two miles, making it necessary to restrict the tourists to one-way travel. One enters the valley on the odd hour and leaves it on the even. Rangers at each end of control direct the cars, which often number fifteen hundred in a day for one way only. The name and address of each driver is taken by the ranger in charge, together with the number of the car and license, in case of accident. A similar efficiency marks the placing of tourists after they reach the valley floor. As each

one registers at the government office, he is directed to one of the many camp sites by number, an arrangement that makes possible an even distribution of campers in the different locations.

That first evening we joined hundreds of other tourists at Camp Curry for the nightly fall of fire, a custom developed probably from the ancient signals of the Indian. At nine o'clock, the camp director cups his hand and in a clear singing voice calls up to Glacier Point three thousand feet above, "Hello Glacier." After a pause comes back the answer from Eternity, it seems, "Hello Curry!" Again the cupped hands and singing voice, this time as deliberate as a chant. "Let the fire fa—a—ll." The last word is trailed suggestively from a high to a low note. Now the fire-maker three thousand feet above, who has been building up his flame since eight o'clock, begins to push the brands over the edge of rock into space. A few sparks at first, they rapidly increase until a great glowing stream pours itself down into the night with the rhythm of a waterfall. A minute—it is over—and the crowd departs.

Had we foreseen what Fate was preparing for us, we might have remained in the valley longer than a few days, but we were eager to push on to Seattle

and the Yellowstone, and thus complete our circle. As it was, however, we took time for the ledge climb to Glacier Point—a trip which showed Aunt Isa in her true colors and gave us a surprise.

We were to start for the point at six-thirty, but on being called, Aunt Isa told us from her blanket that we might make the effort if we wished; as for her, a quiet rest was more appealing. We missed her company but applauded her decision as the trail grew steeper and more dangerous. We told ourselves again and again that "she never could have done it."

That afternoon when we returned to camp, we found her where we had left her, sitting on her blanket and mending a pair of stockings.

"Well, and how have you spent the day?" we asked.

"Oh, I climbed to Glacier Point," she told us calmly.

When we demanded an explanation she said that she had dreaded being a hindrance and only waited until we were out of sight before taking the trail. She—who had beaten us home by an hour—still had courage enough left to darn her stockings!

The next day with our brakes nicely re-lined and our gas tank full, we left Yosemite by the Big



Keystone View Company Photograph, MHS Photograph Archives

Tourists at the Grand Canyon of the Colorado

Oak Flat road and for the last ride we were ever to have with Oliver.

The end came about fifteen miles from the valley near a place called, fittingly enough, "Ford's Rest." We had been finding the road very difficult, frequently stopping to cool the engine and the radiator. Once, two of us got out and walked, and a Y.T.S. bus driver offered to tow the car to the top; but our pride prevented accepting the offer. We had been through a lot, we told him, and our brakes were in good condition.

At Ford's Rest, there was a grade of twenty-eight per cent, though we did not know that until afterwards, and we stopped once more to cool off, placing a block behind one of the rear wheels. The driver climbed out to stretch, and then everything happened so quickly, it is difficult to tell just what did take place.

Whether the block was too small or the brake not firmly in position, or whether Oliver rebelled on general principles, no one can say. All we know is that suddenly without warning, he slid over the block, swerved to the inside of the road, and then bounded over the outer edge. We watched him roll over until he caught in some trees, flopped over on his side, and lay still.

Two charitable young rangers gave us fifty dollars for the wreck and a legal bill of sale, enough to get us to San Francisco where we took the train for home.

We are glad to hear that the two young rangers are as energetic as they are charitable, for with block and tackle and a few new parts, they put Oliver back on his wheels again. Now, they say, in a coat of blue paint as startling as the one we had so carefully concealed with black enamel, he does the daily bidding of his masters.

Such is the irony of opinion—and the end of our story. *am*

KATHRYN STEPHEN WRIGHT was born in 1898 in Tamarack, Michigan. Wright was graduated from college in Syracuse, New York, and taught English at the Ranch School in Charlo, Montana. After her trip in the West, Wright taught school in Trenton, New Jersey, and Akron, Ohio, where she married the Rev. J. Carroll Wright, pastor of the Westminster Presbyterian Church. After his death, Kathryn Wright was named a Director of Christian Education and served churches in Cleveland, Ohio, Washington, D.C., Greenwich, Connecticut, and the Riverside Church in New York City. She earned a Master's degree at Union Theological Seminary and Teachers College when she was in her early sixties and published two books on Christian education. For twenty years after her retirement, Wright lived in Port Jarvis, New York. She currently lives in Lynchburg, Virginia.

*"One glimpse of the undisputed monarch of the Red-Woods
and we forgave the hairpin turns."*



Aunt Ida driving through Wawona in the Mariposa Grove of Big Trees

MHS Photograph Archives